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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MANILA 002369

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STATE FOR EAP/MTS
USPACOM ALSO FOR J5
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/14/2017
TAGS: [PTER](#) [MOPS](#) [PINS](#) [RP](#)
SUBJECT: ARROYO ORDERS RULE OF LAW FOR PERPETRATORS OF
BEHEADINGS

REF: A. MANILA 2358

[1](#)B. MANILA 2344

Classified By: Acting Pol/C Paul O'Friel for
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Peace Panel sources speculate that the ambush and beheadings of the ten Philippine Marines in Tipo-Tipo, Basilan may have been triggered by the murder of a Muslim cleric. Muslim and Christian leaders throughout the Philippines are condemning the beheadings. President Arroyo has directed government security forces to bring the perpetrators of the beheadings to justice in accordance with rule of law and peace process mechanisms. An investigation of the July 10 ambush of the Marines is now underway by the Joint Committee for the Cessation of Hostilities. Armed Forces of the Philippines Commander General Hermogenes Esperon has ordered all troops deployed on Basilan to exercise restraint and discipline. End Summary.

Body of Muslim Cleric Found

[1](#)2. (C) According to Philippine Government Peace Negotiations Panel Executive Director Ryan Sullivan, the body of a Muslim cleric was found in Barangay Ginanta, Tipo-Tipo, Basilan prior to the ambush of the Philippine Marines on July 10 (ref a). Sullivan speculated that there could be a connection between the Muslim cleric's murder and the ambush.

Muslims and Christians Condemn Beheadings

[1](#)3. (SBU) Muslim and Christian leaders throughout the Philippines are condemning the July 10 beheadings of the ten Marines. Basilan Congressman Wahab Akbar called the beheadings "a violation of Islamic law." Philippine Islamic Council President Taha Basman referred to the incident as "a black spot in the country's history" while calling for "a more aggressive campaign against bandits and terrorists, and promotion of interfaith and intrafaith dialogue among the civilized members of society."

Arroyo Orders Perpetrators Brought to Justice

14. (SBU) In a July 12 press statement, President Arroyo emphasized rule of law and adherence to peace process mechanisms for government security forces "duty-bound to hunt down and arrest those who treacherously killed and beheaded" the ten marines. Arroyo also said that "if the perpetrators are Abu Sayyaf, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) must stand apart from these terrorists and allow their pursuit and interdiction by government forces. If MILF forces are culpable, then they must be accounted for by the ceasefire committees and brought to justice."

Investigation Underway

15. (C) A Joint Committee for the Cessation of Hostilities Chairmen Brig-Gen Edgardo Guerra and his MILF counterpart, Von Al Haq, arrived in Basilan on July 13 to investigate the incident. Sullivan said the focus of their investigation would be to determine who was responsible for the beheadings, whether there was a breach of the ceasefire agreement, and the reason for any such breach.

16. (C) Sullivan expected the Joint Committee to issue a report to the GRP-MILF Peace Panels within three or four days. Based on the Joint Committee's findings/recommendations, appropriate measures would be adopted to ensure the effectiveness of peace process mechanisms on Basilan, said Sullivan.

17. (C) Sullivan noted that Armed Forces of the Philippines Commander General Hermogenes Esperon Jr. has issued orders to all troops deployed on Basilan to exercise restraint and discipline.

MANILA 00002369 002 OF 002

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